

## **Grassroots Social Marketing Takes Capacity**

Rarely am I excited about the prospects of an upcoming meeting. However, I have a meeting coming right up that makes me very happy. Not only do I get to drive up the canyon 25 miles to beautiful Park City, Utah, I also get to work with a local committee to try to keep our East Canyon social marketing efforts alive and on track.

Following environmental assessments, the beginning of the total maximum daily load (TMDL) allocation process, and both quantitative and qualitative audience research, the watershed committee started a social marketing campaign in February 2008. Phase one of the campaign was centered around dog waste left on the extensive system of trails in the area. We developed radio and newspaper advertising spots, and planned to deliver copies of the print ads to veterinary offices and pet stores in the area. We would also have a display at local spring and summer community events.

It all started out well enough. Then, less than two months into the campaign, the education coordinator from the Swaner Ecocenter left her position. She was the person on the local watershed education committee with whom I was working to implement the behavior change campaign. She left and I got busy with other spring and summer projects, which slowed progress. Additionally, the overall watershed coordinator left his job to take a better paying federal job in California. What started out as a promising integrated campaign at the beginning of 2008, has turned into an anemic local advertising effort, with little or no grassroots, community based, marketing and outreach to compliment and bolster the media efforts.

That's why I am hoping for a treat of a Halloween week meeting, instead of more of the organizational capacity tricks the committee has experienced this year.

Loss of key personnel, funding and other local capacity issues are not unique to the East Canyon watershed committee. In my experience it seems all too common for locally lead conservation efforts to fail or slow down because of manpower or funding capacity issues.

While I don't believe there is a one-size-fits-all solution, networking and partnership building seem to be fairly effective ways of avoiding failure or loss of momentum in local conservation efforts.